



Complaints Policy

Document Title	Complaints Policy
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Author Department	Director of Customer Experience
Target Audience	All emh colleagues

Approved By	Executive Management Team (EMT)
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Regulatory Context	Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards, specifically the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard <ul style="list-style-type: none">Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
Outcomes for Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accessible, timely informationA clear, simple, and accessible complaints serviceComplaints are resolved promptly, politely, and fairly.
Customer Voice and Influence	Policy consultation and engagement arrangements in line with emh homes' policy development and customer influence frameworks, including a scrutiny panel review.
Training Provision	Relevant colleagues will receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none">BriefingsTrainingProcedural supportManagement supportComplaint quality checks
Links to the Corporate Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hearing the Voice of ResidentsCustomer ServiceRegulatory Compliance
Links to Key Values	Underpinning this policy are emh's values of Integrity, Diversity, Openness, Accountability, Clarity and Excellence.

Version Control

Version	Revision Date	Author: Job Title	Change Description
2	April 2022	Customer Voice Manager	<p>Updated to align with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (April 2022):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarified matters that do <u>not</u> fall within scope. • Strengthened principles around customer expectations, early clarification of complaint nature and the Complaint Handling Code. • Enhanced clarification about Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. • Removed references to Stage 3 appeals. • Enhanced the range of remedies available when resolving complaints. • Strengthened the lessons learned approach. • Strengthened Governance support. • Added a new section on self-assessment and compliance.
3	May 2023	Customer Voice Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarified that complaints regarding the handling of an ASB case will be treated as a complaint. • Expanded the definition of a complaint. • Confirmed guidance for complaint exclusion and how this decision would be communicated. • Expanded the explanation staff conduct complaints and how these will be managed. • Expanded the accessibility section. • Added a time scale for complaint response, from first point of contact. • Expanded on the reasoning on how decisions are made. • Updated accepting complaints via a third party. • Provided clarity to declining an escalation request to stage 2.
4	April 2024	Customer Voice Manager/Head of Quality and Performance	<p>Updated in line with the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specified in the introduction who the policy applies to. • Added the definition of a Service Request and how these are escalated. • Updated what complaints will be investigated. • Updated exclusions section. • Added policy objectives. • Added timescales for logging a complaint. • Updated escalation process and timescales. • Expanded section on continuous improvement.
5	Sept 2026	Director of Customer Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General review of content and formatting. • Updated accessibility and awareness information. • Incorporates Housing Ombudsman feedback.



Complaints Policy

Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out emh homes' approach to complaint handling.
- 1.2 Emh is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, following their terms and guidance. This policy aligns with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaints Handling Code, which become statutory from 1 April 2024. The Code and emh, promote a positive complaint handling culture.
- 1.3 Whilst Emh is committed to providing an excellent service, we recognise that sometimes things go wrong. When this happens, we will do our best to resolve the issue as quickly as possible, identifying learning to improve our services for residents.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to residents that live in emh owned properties; tenants, shared owners, licensees and former residents.
- 2.2 The complaint handling code defines a complaint as expressing dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its staff or those acting on its behalf. Anyone who expresses dissatisfaction will have the choice for the matter to be investigated as a complaint. They do not have to have used the word 'complaint'.
- 2.3 Complaints relating to the alleged misconduct of emh colleagues will also be dealt with by the People Team, under the Disciplinary Procedure. Whilst any employment related matter will be addressed by the People Team, the customer-facing complaint would continue under this policy. We cannot divulge the outcome of any disciplinary investigations due to confidentiality. We will explain what our investigations involved.
- 2.4 Emh will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. Reasons to not accept a complaint include:
 - The issue occurred, or the resident became aware of it, more than 12 months ago.
 - Associated legal action has started; with details of the claim having been filed at court.
 - The complaint has previously been fully investigated under the complaints policy.

Each case will be considered on its merits, including vulnerability, delayed awareness and other good reason.

- 2.5 We will provide a detailed explanation if we do not accept a complaint. We can apply discretion. The resident can contact the HOS if they do not agree with the decision.
- 2.6 We will not process a service request as a complaint. A service request is an ask for action to be taken, rather than an expression of dissatisfaction. If a resident is dissatisfied with the action taken to resolve a service request we will log this as a complaint, unless there is a clear and legitimate reason not to. Raising a complaint will not prevent, delay or otherwise impact the service request, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Service requests will be logged for information and learning purposes.



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2.7 The following matters are out of scope for this policy:

- Personal injury or third-party liability claims. These are dealt with by our insurers.
- Behaviour of our residents. We have a separate Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy. If a resident is dissatisfied with their ASB case management, a complaint can be raised.
- Dissatisfaction with policy content: Feedback will be acknowledged, responded to, and considered as part of future policy reviews.
- Complaints that are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) under Consumer Credit Activities. These are dealt with under a separate policy as required by the FCA.
- Complaints from business or corporate partners.

Aims

3.1 The key aims of this policy are to provide a complaints service that:

- Is clear, simple, and accessible.
- Ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely, and fairly.
- Enables residents to be heard and understood.
- Ensures that we learn and make improvements from complaints.

4. Principles:

4.1 In line with emh homes' social purpose, as a registered housing provider, the principles of this policy are:

- Clear, customer-centred, accessible communication and services.
- Commitment to equal opportunities, making reasonable adjustments as required.
- Evidence-based decision-making.
- Listening to learn.
- Using customer feedback to drive service improvements.

5. Responsibilities

	Responsible for:
Staff Members	Complying with this policy and associated procedures
Managers	Operational delivery and colleague support. Quality assurance and case oversight
EMT	Approving the policy Receiving assurance regarding performance, compliance and risks.
Board	Seeking assurance that effective arrangements are in place to listen and learn from customers, manage risks and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
Customers	To report matters of dissatisfaction promptly, in a respectful manner. Providing detail and evidence as required, to enable a thorough investigation.

6. Making a complaint

- 6.1 We will make it easy for residents to complain; providing a variety of channels for a complaint to be made. These include:
- Telephone
 - Myhomeonline
 - Face to face with an emh colleague
 - E-mail
 - Social Media Platforms
 - Contacting a local MP or councillor
 - Write to emh homes:
Memorial House, Whitwick Business Park, Stenson Road, Coalville, LE67 4JP.
- 6.2 If we receive a complaint via social media, we will ask for the details to be sent in a private message. This is to prevent confidential details being disclosed. If details are not provided privately, then the complaint may not be logged, and a response will not be given.
- 6.3 We will accept complaints that are raised by a third party, on behalf of our residents. We will only release information relating to the complaint to the third party, when we have written consent from the associated resident(s). We will seek to obtain this consent before a formal response is provided.
- 6.4 When a resident makes a complaint to emh we will provide contact information for the HOS. We provide the HOS information early, so that residents are aware that they have a right to access their Dispute Support Advisors throughout the life of a complaint, not only after our conclusion.
- 6.5 We publish our complaints procedure on our website and include a flow chart of the process in complaint communications to residents, online and in publications.

7. Complaint Handling

- 7.1 Emh's Complaints Team are responsible for:
- Complaint handling, ensuring complaints receive the necessary attention.
 - Ensuring adequate resources, to ensure consistency of service.
 - Declaring any conflicts of interests. In such circumstances a case would be managed by an alternative team member.
 - Ensuring a professional and fair service, which is respectful and suitably confidential.
 - Having the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.
 - Acting independently, keeping an open mind and using an evidenced based approach.
 - Ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place for liaison with the HOS.
- 7.2 We are dedicated to learning from our mistakes. Where things have gone wrong, we will apologise. Where possible, we will agree the resolution with the resident, including the actions we have taken, or intend to take to put things right. This will include consideration beyond the individual complaint, considering trends, complexity, timeframes and the severity of the case.
- 7.3 Compensation will be awarded in line with the Compensation Policy.
- 7.4 We will take account of the guidance issued by the HOS when deciding on appropriate remedies.

- 7.5 In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. If this is the case, we will still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded.

8. Stage 1

- 8.1 We will acknowledge and log a complaint within 5 working days of it being received. This starts Stage 1 of the process.
- 8.2 If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident will be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties. We will manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.
- 8.3 Within the complaint acknowledgement, we will confirm our understanding of the complaint and the outcome(s) the resident is seeking.
- 8.4 We will conduct our complaints investigations in an impartial manner and will look to seek adequate, reliable information from both parties so that fair and appropriate findings and recommendations can be made. We will aim to resolve complaints at the earliest possible opportunity, having assessed the evidence needed and whether any urgent actions are required.
- 8.5 If the problem is a recurring issue, we will consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint, if this helps to resolve the issue for the resident.
- 8.6 If a resident is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they will need to let us know within 20 working days of our response, to request a review at Stage 2 of the process.

9. Stage 2

- 9.1 If a resident contacts us within 20 days of receiving their Stage 1 outcome letter, informing that they remain dissatisfied, we will progress the complaint to stage two of the process. We will contact the customer within 5 days of being informed that they remain dissatisfied, to confirm that their case has been escalated to Stage 2. The acknowledgement will clearly set out our understanding of why they remain dissatisfied (if known) and the outcomes they are seeking.
- 9.2 If a Stage 2 request is received outside of the 20 working day deadline, emh have discretion. Discretion will depend on the individual circumstances of the case and the timeframe. We will give written reasoning if a request to escalate to Stage 2 is refused. Residents have the right to approach the Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with this decision.
- 9.3 If any aspect of the complaint remains unclear, the resident will be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties. There is no requirement for residents to provide reasons for requesting their complaint to be escalated to stage 2.
- 9.4 We will only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one part of the complaints process, and at the request of the resident.
- 9.5 The person investigating the complaint at stage two, will not be the same person that investigated at stage one.

10. Complaint Outcomes

- 10.1 For Stage 1 complaints, we will respond within 10 working days of the it being acknowledged, 20 working days for Stage 2 complaints. The Complaint Handling Code permits an extension based on complaint complexity, limited to 10 working days at Stage 1 and 20 at Stage 2. If we apply this extension we will provide written reasoning, an expected response date and the Ombudsman's contact details.
- 10.2 If an extension beyond the timeframes outlines in 10.1 is required, to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this will be agreed by both parties. Emh will agree with the resident suitable intervals for being updated on their complaint, recognising that their response falls outside of the extended timescales set out in the Code. The details of the HOS will be provided again, at this point, to enable escalation if required.
- 10.3 Our Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint outcomes will:
- Be issued in writing, using clear plain language.
 - State the complaint stage.
 - Define the complaint and reasons for dissatisfaction.
 - For Stage 2, confirm the remaining dissatisfaction, if known.
 - Address all points raised.
 - Provide clear reasons for any decisions; referencing policy, law, and good practice,
 - Explain any remedy, actions being taken, and associated timescales.
 - Detail outstanding actions and completion or update timescales.
 - Our Stage 1 responses will explain how to escalate to Stage 2 if dissatisfaction remains.
 - Our Stage 2 responses will confirm emh's final response, providing details of how to escalate the case to the HOS.
- 10.4 Outcomes may be given before all outstanding actions have been completed. In this case we will provide regular updates to the resident, until all associated actions have been completed.
- 10.5 If an additional complaint(s) is raised during an investigation, these will be incorporated into the complaint investigation, if relevant, and providing the outcome letter has not been issued. Where the response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint will be logged as a new complaint.

11. Lessons Learnt

- 11.1 We record and monitor all complaints received to identify trends, drive service improvements, and improve customer experience. Complaint information is reviewed by relevant managers and colleagues across emh to support learning and continuous improvement, with complaint handling performance regularly reviewed and reported to residents through the Annual Report to Residents, Resident Panels, and other appropriate communication channels.
- 11.2 Organisational learning and changes to policy and services resulting from complaints will be captured and shared with our Board, Executive Management Team, colleagues, and residents. This will include internal and external annual reporting.
- 11.3 Once a complaint has been closed, we will contact residents to ask for their views on the handling and outcome of their complaint.

11.4 Senior Management and our governing bodies will receive regular information about our complaint's performance, including:

- Complaint volumes, categories, and outcomes.
- Complaint handling issues, trends, and key learning, including non-accepted complaints.
- Service improvements resulting from complaints.
- Updates and progress relating to the outcomes of HOS determinations and reports.
- Any findings of non-compliance with the complaints handling code.
- Self-assessment against the HOS complaint handling code (available on our website).

12. Performance Management

12.1 This policy will be implemented through detailed procedures, colleague guidance, system controls and performance reporting.

12.2 Performance against this policy will be measured by:

- Complaints performance
- Staff one to one and team discussions
- Customer feedback (including complaints and HOS determinations)
- Internal and external audit reports
- Regulatory reviews

13. Communication

13.1 Colleagues delivering services under this policy will be supported by appropriate training, procedural guidance and management oversight.

3.2.1 A copy of this policy will be distributed to all relevant teams, available on our staff intranet and on emh's website.

14. Data Protection

14.1 Customer data is held in our housing & document management systems in accordance with relevant Data Protection policies. emh homes will collect, use, store and share personal information in accordance with data protection legislation, information governance requirements and privacy notices.

14.2 Information sharing with support agencies will be undertaken lawfully, proportionately and only where it is necessary to support case management, tenancy sustainment or safeguarding.

15. Equality & Diversity

15.1 emh homes will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010, making reasonable adjustments where required; aiming to ensure equality of treatment for all customers without discrimination or prejudice.

15.2 Where a customer is vulnerable, has additional support needs or requires reasonable adjustments, these factors will be identified, recorded and considered in service delivery and decision-making. This could include translation services, home visits or an authorised person to act on a resident's behalf.

15.3 Emh will identify and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns arising during complaint management activity.

16. Review

16.1 This policy may be reviewed earlier than the stated review date, if there are significant changes in legislation, regulation, case law, regulatory expectations, organisational structure or operational practice.

17. Associated Documents

- Complaints Procedure & Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Compensation Policy
- Vulnerability Policy
- Acceptable Behaviour Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy & Grievance Procedure
- Corporate Policies and Procedures relating to Safeguarding, Data Protection, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Information Governance
- Relevant legal and regulatory guidance that informs complaint management activity.